



## AT BETHLEHEM.

to many hills arising, green and gay,  
To Earth's large round, and that one hill to say,  
"I was His bearing place!" On Earth's wide breast  
to many maidens! And she—of all most blest—  
Heavily mounting Bethlehem, to be  
His Mother!—Holy Maid of Galilee!  
Hill, with the olive, and the little town!  
If rivers from their crystal fountains flow down,  
If 'twas the Dawn which did Day's gold unbar,  
The most we see, the highest that we know,  
The lifting Heavenward of Man's life below.  
Therefore, though better lips ye shall not lack,  
Suffice if one of modern mood steals back—  
Weary and wayworn, from the Desert road  
Of barren Thought; from Hope's Dead Sea, which  
glowed  
With Love's fair mirage; from the Poet's haunt,  
The scholar's lamp, the statesman's scheme, the  
vain,  
The failure, of all fond Philosophies—  
Back unto Thee, back to thy olive trees,  
Thy people, and thy story, and thy Son,  
Mary of Nazareth! So long ago  
Bearing us Him who made our Christendom,  
And came to save the Earth, from Heav'n, His  
home.

This earthly span—gross, brief—wherein we  
smile,  
Hardly and faintly, glimpses of Times past  
Which have been boundless, and of Times to last  
Beyond them timelessly, how should such be  
All to be seen, all we were made to see?  
This flesh fallacious, binding us, indeed,  
To sense, and yet so largely leaving freed  
That we do know things as we cannot know,  
And high and higher on Thought's stairways go  
Till each last round leads to some sudden steep  
Where reason swims and falters, or must leap  
Headlong, perforce, into the infinite,  
How should we say outside this shines no light  
Of lovelier scenes unseen, of lives which spread  
Pleasant and unexpected for the Dead,  
As our World, opening to the Babe's wide eyes  
New from the womb, and full of birth's surprise?  
How should this prove the All, the Last, the First?  
Why shall no inner, under, splendours burst  
Once—twice—the Veil? Why put a marvel by  
Because too rich with Hope? Why quite deny  
The Heavenly story, lest our doubtful hearts—  
Which mark the stars, and take them for bright  
TARNS  
Of boundless Being, ships of life that sail  
In glittering argosies—without a tale,  
Without a term—or, of that shoreless Sea,  
The scattered silver islets, drifting free  
To destines unmeasured—see, too, there  
By help of dead believing eyes, which were,  
The peoples of the Stars; and listen, meek,  
To those vast voices of the Stars, which speak—  
If ever they shall speak—in each man's tongue?

And, truly, if Joy's music once hath rung  
From lips of hands invisible, if any—  
(Be they the Dead, or of the deathless Many)—  
Love and serve Man, angelical Befrienders,  
Glad of his weal, and from his woe Defenders—  
If such, in Heaven, have pity on our tears,  
Forever falling with the unending years,  
High cause had they, at Bethlehem, that night  
To lift the curtain of Hope's hidden light,  
To break decree of silence with Love's cry,  
Foreseeing how this Babe, born lowly,  
Should—past dispute, since now achieved is this—  
Bring Earth great gifts of blessing and of bliss;  
Date, from that crib, the Dynasty of Love;  
Strip his misused thunderbolts from Jove;  
Bend to their knee Rome's Cæsars, break the chain  
From the slave's neck; set sick hearts free again  
Historically bound by priests, and scribes, and scrolls;  
And heal, with halm of pardon, sinking souls;  
Should Mercy to her vacant throne restore,  
Teach Right to Kings, and Patience to the poor;  
Should by His sweet Name all names overthrow,  
And by His lovely words, the quick seeds sow  
Of golden equities, and brotherhood,  
Of Pity, Peace, and gentle grace of Good;  
Of knightly honor, holding life in trust  
For God, and Lord, and all things pure and just;  
Lowly to Woman; for Maid Mary's sake  
Lifting our sister from the dust, to take  
In homes her equal place, the Household's Queen,  
Crowned and august who sport and thrall had  
been;

Of arts adorning Life, of charities  
Gracious and wide, because the impartial skies  
Roof one race in; and poor, weak, mean, op-  
pressed,  
Are children of one boundless Mother's breast,  
One Father's care; encompassing Man,  
Should, from that bearing cave, outside the Khan,  
Amid the kneeling cattle, rise, and be  
Light of all lands, and splendor of each sea,  
The sun-burst of a new Morn come to Earth,  
Not yet, alas! broad Day, but Day's white birth  
Which promethis; and blestness, promising,  
These from that Night! What cause of wondering  
If that one Silence of all Silences  
Break into music? If, for hopes like these  
Angels, who love us, sang that song, and show  
Of Time's far purpose made the "great light" glow?

Wherefore, let whosoever will drink dry  
His cup of faith; and think that, verily,  
Not in a vision, no way otherwise  
Than those poor shepherds told, there did arise  
This portent. Being amidst their sheep and goats,  
Lapped careless in their pasture keeping coats,  
Blind as their drowsy beasts to what drew nigh,  
(Such the lulled ear, and such the unbowed eye  
Which oftentimes hears and sees but things) there  
spread  
The "Glory of the Lord" around each head,  
A Light not morn-glow, nor the gray of Night,  
Nor lightning flash, nor lit like any light  
By earthly orbs beheld, but fetched from beam  
Of that Concentral Sun whereby Silences gleam,  
Which kindles spheres, and has for dusk full Noon,  
Shining behind the Blue, past Sun and Moon,  
And making hyaline of ether clear  
Where, with new eyes, clear—free of Death and  
Fear—  
In range incomprehensible, and ray  
Of limitless illumine, see alive  
Authentic Being: outside Life's close bars,  
By Life's light blotted, as at noon the stars,  
Such light spreads bright behind that blindness  
here

Which men name "seeing," and such Heav'n-Dawn

(As it had reason by such Day to follow!)  
Be it, be it deemed, o'er hill and over hollow,  
On the inner seeing, the sense concealed, unknown,  
Of those plain blinds—glad, humble and alone—  
Flooding their minds, filling their hearts; around,  
Above, below, disclosing grove and ground,  
The rocks, the hill, the town, the solitude,  
The wondering flocks—agaze with grass half-  
chewed—

The palm crowns, and the path to Bethlehem,  
As sight angelic spies. And, came to them  
The "Angel of the Lord," visible, sure,  
Known for the Angel by his presence pure  
Whereon was written Love and Peace and Grace,  
With beauty passing mortal mien and face,  
His form declaring him. We should not seek—  
As they, too, sought not—any voice to speak  
The titles of the chief of those who stand  
Bearing our Names, for 'till the end of Hand  
Which scatters Suns and Stars alight the Blue  
As sowers fling the seed. We should know, too,  
The great and tender eyes, sad with our sinning,  
Glad when we strive aright, 'ware of Beginning,  
And Ending, and the Reasons and the Path;  
That gracious, potent Friend who wisdom hath  
Of Whence all comes, and whereunto all go;  
(He, in Gethsemane, did see him so!)  
The embodied, blinding, loveliness of all  
Which, of Earth's dearest Dead, our hearts recall,  
To perfectness transfigured and combined;  
In heavenly type of utmost Humankind.  
Not robed, nor sandalled, as the painters him,  
But past all dreams, till we wake, seeing him;  
And, then, as natural, as dear, as known  
As to the Babe His Mother's brows bent down,  
Wingless; for where these live these blows no  
wind.

Nor ought to grose as air, nor any kind  
Of substance, whereby a lit's march is stopped;  
Nothing so heavy as the snow-drops dropped  
Feather-like on the wild swan's feather, or dip  
Of swallow in the streamlet, or Love's lip  
Kissing the Dead. Oh, Certes! not of men,  
Yet, blending form with spirit; nay, and then,  
Supreme, majestic! for terror fell—  
With woman—on their hearts, the writings tell;  
So that the Angel of the Lord had need  
To comfort them, speaking these words, indeed—  
"Fear not! For behold I bring you good  
tidings of great joy, which shall be to all  
people."

"For unto you is born this day in the city  
of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the  
Lord."

"And this the sign unto you! Ye shall find  
the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes ly-  
ing in a manger."

Might he not speak so, if, in truth, we heard  
Our Angel, and "the Lord's," with simple word  
Easy and sweet, as to her little son,  
A nursing mother; or—when Night is done—  
Dawn's soft breath whispering plain, "Lo! I am  
Day!"

But, of those things which the Bright One did say,  
So high, so new, so glad, so comforting,  
"Good tidings of great joy to you I bring!"  
The echo, not the meaning, of his speech  
Lives; and men tell it sadly each to each,  
With lips, not hearts; sadly, from tongue to  
tongue,  
The Ages, unpersuaded, pass along  
The dulcet message, like a dream bygone  
Which was for happy sleepers, but is down,  
We bleed, and hate, and suffer, and are blind,  
Uncomprehending; yet, if one will mind,  
That light is shining still on Life's far side;  
And the Apostle, and Heaven's angel, lie,  
Or else, from Heaven that night 'till Evangel fell—  
"Beginnings of the Golden Times we tell!"  
Now is the Law opened! Mary's son  
Hath opened it, and, when full times are run,  
Peace shall be, and Good-will, and Mercy shed  
Over all flesh and spirit, quick and dead!  
The consummation comes, the purposed Bliss;  
Earth was for Now; her glad days spring from  
this!

Nor only that one Angel (if we dare  
Revered for "moderately with him there  
A multitude of heavenly ones," who through  
The silvery gleam, all singing that same song  
Of Peace and Love; all—for our Planet's sake—  
Praising Him.

'Tis the Name He spoke  
In th' Aramaic, at His Mother's knee,  
In white-walled Nazareth of Galilee,  
Lips first speech; and after, on His Cross;  
But we have more misused, to all men's loss,  
The great word "God," speaking the Unspeaking  
To daily lips, and doing no wise well  
To give thereby parts, passions, qualities  
To the All-Being, Who hath none of these;  
Mingling weak mortal thoughts of "Sire" and  
"King."

In "God the Father," and so worshipping  
An idol, served with muttered spell and moan,  
Baser than brass, and duller than dead stone;  
A graven image of that Glorious All  
Who hath no form, and Whom His Angels call  
By never uttered names, and Whom to see  
Not once hath been, and never once shall be;  
Who doth, in universal rule, possess  
Majesty, beauty, love, deliquitencies;  
The omnipresent, conscious Joy, "Twere well—  
If name must be—with Mary's Son to spell  
This unspelled Word, mystical, free of dread,  
Ancient and hallowed; and by those lips said  
Which knew its meaning most, and called "God"  
so,  
"Elo!" (in the Highest.)

Heaven's glow!  
And the mild burden of its minstrelsy—

Peace beginning to be  
Deep as the sleep of the sea  
When the stars their faces glass  
In its blue tranquillity;  
Hearts of men upon earth,  
From the first to the second birth,  
To rest as the wild waters rest  
With the colors of Heaven in their breast.

Love, which is sunlight of peace,  
Age by age to increase,  
Till Anger and Hatred are dead  
And Sorrow and Death shall cease:  
"Peace on Earth and Good-will!"  
Souls that are gentle and still  
Hear the first music of this  
Far off, infinite Bliss!

So—or in such wise—those rude shepherds heard  
The Angels singing clear; when not one word  
Wiser ones caught that night—solemn and still—  
Of their high errand:—"Peace! Good-will! Good-  
will!"

Ah! think we listened there,  
With opened heart and ear,  
And heard, in truth, as these men say they heard,  
On rock and rock and tree,  
Raining such melody;  
Heaven's love descending in that loveliest word,  
"Peace!" Not at first! not yet!  
Our Earth had to forget  
Burden of birth and travail of slow years;  
But now the dark time done!  
Daylight at length begun!  
First gold of Sun in sight, dispelling fears!

Peace pledged at last to Man!  
Oh! if there only ran  
Thrill of such surety through one human soul,  
Would not the swift joy start  
From beating heart to heart,  
Lighting all lands, leaping from pole to pole?

Peace, Peace—to come! to be!  
If such were certainty  
Far-off, at length, at latest, any while,  
What woe were hard to bear?  
What sorrow worth one tear?  
Murder would soften, black Despair would smile.

But, heralded on high,  
From midnight's purple sky  
Dropped like the sudden rain which brings the  
flowers;  
Peace! Aye to dwell with men  
No strife, no wars! and, then,  
The coupled comfort of those golden hours.

Good-will! Consider this,  
What easy, perfect bliss  
If, over all the earth the one change spread  
That Hate and Fraud should die,  
And all in amity,  
Let go rapine, and wrath, and wrong, and dread!

What lack of Paradise  
If, in angelic wise,  
Each unto each, as to himself were dear?  
If we in souls desired,  
Whatever form might hide,  
Own brother, and own sister, everywhere?

All this—not whispered low  
To one heart, full of woe  
By reason of blood reddened fields of Earth,  
By sight of Fear and Hate,  
And policies of state,  
And evil fruits which have from these their birth.

But, through their ears, to us  
Straightly imparted thus  
With pomp of glittering Angels, and their train;  
And radiance of such light  
As maketh midday night,  
And heavenly speech of Heaven, not heard  
again.



Till these things come to pass—  
Nay, if it be—  
A vision, let us sleep and dream it true!  
Or—sane and broad awake,  
For its great sound and sake,  
Take it, and make it Earth's, and peace ensue!

## BOOK I

## MARY MAGDALENE

Clear silver water in a cup of gold,  
Under the sunlit steep of Gadar,  
It shines—His Lake—the sea of Chinnereth—  
The waves He loved, the waves that kissed His feet  
So many blessed days. Oh, happy waves!  
Oh, little, silver, happy sea, far famed,  
Under the sunlit steep of Gadar!

Fair is the scene still, tho' the grace is gone  
Of those great times when white cities dipped  
Their walls into its brink, and steel ships heeled  
Of Roman galleys round its sparkling sand;  
And Herod's painted pinnaces, ablaze  
With lamps, and brazen shields and spangled  
slaves,  
Came and went lordly at Tiberias;  
And merchant ships of Ghoe, and fisher boats,  
From green Bethesda and Capernaum drove  
Pearl furrows in the sapphire of its sleep;  
And, by its beach—where the cranes wade mid leg,  
And long reeds lie; and milky ripples roll  
The purple banded shells; and wind fall'n flowers  
Of date and oleander dye the firm  
Of blown foam rose—wended by, league long,  
The caravans of Egypt, treasure stuffed,  
To proud Damascus, or thronged Sepphoris,  
Or Ache's quay. Or, Cesar's breeding rode  
Terrible with the eagles, bearing news  
Of life and death from Rome. Or strode anstere,  
Contemptuous, daunting phylacteries,  
The Pharisee and Scribe. Or, noise of slaves  
Sweating beneath the litter's glided poles,  
Told where they passed some languid Palace dame  
Fresh from the bath; or proctor, gilt with rods,  
Or there went by, upon its rocky brim,  
The high camped Median bringing stallions in,  
The Indian traders with the spice and silk,  
The negro men from Cush, and Elamites,  
And Red Sea sailors; and from shores of Nile  
The blue-gowned swart Egyptian; for they filled  
From all earth's regions, in those bygone days,  
The pathways by its waters!—frequent feet  
Of Syrian traders, and dark desert men  
Rocking upon their camels, with wild eyes  
Glittering like lance points; and Sidonians,  
Syrians and Greeks and Jews; a motley world  
Treading the enamelled borders, where the vines  
Ran clustering, and the almond's crimson snow  
Rained upon crocus, lily, and cyclamen  
At feet of feathery palms, and tamarisks  
Alive with doves and steel bright halcyons,  
And green and rich rose then the terraced fields  
This coast and that; and loud the water wheels  
Poured the cool crystal of the stream and lake  
Over a thousand gardens; and an air  
Fresher then now—with breath of moistened  
growth—  
Pomegranate, citron, fig—tempered the heats  
Blown from the wilderness; and, more than now,  
Bounteous the mountains soared, with girdling  
woods,  
Homesteads and villages, and melon fields  
Hanging between the rocks, and side by side,  
Temples of Jove and Pan, with synagogues  
Of Israel's Jah. But, opening then, as now,  
To let swift Jordan stay his eager flood  
Under their sunny peaks, foregoing there  
The speed he took from Hermon; glad to spread  
Broadened to lake, fringed with wild figs and daga,

Peopled with pelicans and fish; and fair  
A little to forget how he must glide  
From river into bitter, barren mere,  
Must pass, from waving willows and cold nooks  
Of water lilies, to lie salt and dead,  
Sucked by the Sun under hot Edom's crags,  
In that red hollow of the Sea of Lot.

Now all is changed—all save the changeless  
things—  
The mountains and the waters and the sky.  
These, as He saw them, have their glory yet  
At sunrise and at sunset, and when noon  
Burns the blue vault into a cope of gold.  
And oftentimes, in the Syrian Spring, steals back  
Well nigh the ancient beauty to those coasts  
Where Christ's feet trod. That lily which He loved  
And praised for splendor passing Solomon's—  
The scarlet martagon—decks herself still,  
Mindful of His high words, in red and gold,  
To meet the step of Summer. Cyclamens  
Lift their pale heads to see if He will pass,  
And amaryllis and white hyacinths  
Point from their pearly vases spikenard forth,  
Lest He should come unlooked for. In His paths  
Still, as of old, the lowly crocus spreads  
A golden carpet for him; and the birds—  
Small almoners of Heaven—as once He said—  
Who fall not unregarded—trill their hymns  
Of lively love and thanks in every thorn.  
Only what man could do, Man hath well done  
To blot with blood and tears his track divine,  
To sweep His holy footsteps from His earth.  
In steel and gold, splendid and strong and fierce,  
Host after host under that Mount has marched  
Where he said saying:—"Blessed the peace-  
makers!"

In rage and hatred host with host has clashed  
There where He taught "Love ye your enemies!"  
Banners which bore His cross, have mocked His  
cross,  
Scattering His land with slain; till now, at last,  
Truly the sword, not peace, is what He brought!  
For love of Him nation hates nation so  
That at His shrine the watchful Israelite  
Guards Christian throats! Dead to His once fair  
fields;  
Barren the fallows where His sower sowed;

And there were those who heard what Pilate spoke  
Up to the leeward leaning and that night,  
Unlured by late, or Syrian dances, or plash  
Of fountains tinkling on the painted stones.  
For sleep came not; and she, beside him, said—  
Claudia Procula—"My Lord doeth ill  
To keep sick vigil, when soft beds are spread,  
And guards are set, and even Galilee  
Lends so fair shelter that henceforth in Rome  
We shall think gentler of 'till injurious land."

"In Rome? ah Rome!" stern Pontius cried: "But  
Rome  
Held not my thought, great Claudia! nor these hogs  
We herded with our spear points, pricking them  
Time after time to grunt. Cesar is just,  
And Cesar will not judge me heedlessly—  
Friend of Sejanus, and for ten years, here,  
Keeping the heel of Rome on Herod's neck—  
At word of vile Samaritans. But I  
All day long, as we rode out from the plain  
Of Esdræon—from Samaria  
To Nazareth, and thence to Nazareth,  
With horse and foot and litter, clattered on  
Under the horns of Hattin, and so down,  
Through that dark shadowed Valley of the Dove,  
To this green hollow where the Jordan gains  
Peace for a day before he hastens on  
To foam and fret and die—as rivers die,  
And men die—helplessly! I had in mind  
The Man I did adjudge unrighteously.  
Know'st thou, fair wife! that was His dwelling  
place,  
The poor, white, clustered town amid the hills  
Where we clomb up from Kishon, and you saw  
The hoopoes run in the eye—Solomon's birds,  
Which knew the name of God!—Would I had  
known  
On that ill day at the Prætorium!  
By Pan! I tell thee all the way he came,  
The pale, sweet man; the man that was "the  
King."

And did adjudge us, his judicaries,  
I saw him at Gersam, where I smote  
Those dogs of Sychar—very pitiful  
Marking the blood. And, then, as if he paced  
Effortless over bare Gilboa, 'twas he  
Gazed at me at Megiddo, and Jerzeel;  
And Shunem and Chesulloth, always pale,  
Always with that high look of godlike calm.  
Those eyes of far perception—those mild eyes  
I saw that morn in the Prætorium.  
Accursed morn!—more in my thoughts than Rome!

(Pilate describes the impression made upon him  
by Jesus during the arraignment, trial and leading  
away to crucifixion. Claudia, Pilate's wife, tells  
of her own dreams, or visions, concerning Jesus and  
of the portents that followed the tragedy. Then  
she says:—

"Didst thou hear  
The talk that He had not died at all,  
Or, dying, glided back to life again;  
Was seen; ate, drank, walked, talked—Man among  
men—  
Or if not man (which could not be) then shape,  
Larva, or Lemur, or some unnamed thing,  
Visible, seeming whoso'er Life seems;  
And, lastly, 'escaped from sight? Those whom he  
left,  
A band of honest ones, give stoutly forth  
He was caught up in clouds, snatched to the Blue,  
And, day by day, my slave girls say, this grows—  
Making a sect, which hath no dread of Death;  
But will open a life and breath and gold and pains  
To conquer any wrath; because they hold  
Tis 'Christ' did die for him—grows, good my  
Lord!

Not only here, but in the coasts and Isles;  
And toucheth Athens, and hath crept to Rome."  
"There, too," broke Pontius, "must I find at  
Rome—  
Despite the stony tomb, the guards we set,  
My soldier's word, the spear, stabbed socket deep—  
That face which fills each night with dreams for  
me?  
Will He run over seas whose tireless step  
Outstrips my swiftest war horse, mends my stride  
On every march, pitches my camp with me,  
Sits with me in my tent, my judgment hall,  
My banquet room? Nay! he had place! watches me  
With those great eyes which do not hate or blast,  
But read a keen light to my inmost self  
Where I stand!—This is Pontius, Fortune's slave,  
For Cesar's fear. Sooth! why should I have  
played  
Butcher to Calaphas? Note, Claudia!  
That blood of Julius, spilt to enfranchise Rome,  
Bequeathed Augustus and Tiberius;  
And this pure blood, belike, soon in Death's field,  
May breed a different crop from peace and ease.  
Things fall so very with earth, sometimes I think  
Ily Galilean erred not; that men's powers  
Are lent them out of some Imperium,  
Shadowy, majestic, unopposable,  
Wrangling all wrongers till they render right,  
'Stablished behind the Thrones; where Fate's pipe  
blows,  
And we must dance the step, or be shored by.  
Know any of you hers of any night?  
Who read the Nazarene, and followed Him,  
And cleaved, distraught, to such wild fan'y yet  
Tint Cross, and spear, and gravestones did not end?"

"Great Sir!" a Syrian handmaid gave reply:  
"This is the house is called 'Megaddala,' we lie;  
Named, as some will, from Magdal, where we lie;  
And others from the braided locks she wore  
Who lives, Housemistress, here; the long hair  
tressed  
The Harlots' way. They told us, in the town,  
This Dame—much honored now for noble works—  
Was devil haunted and the wildest wench  
Of Galilee, before the Nazarene  
Tamed her and taught her, and she grew His  
Friend  
Closest amid the faithful. Is't thy will  
We bid her to this Presence?"

Pontius said  
I might command, for still I bear my seal,  
Authority sits yet upon my lips,  
But here and now, I soften. Say to her  
The Procurator, guest and friend, entreats  
Speech with this Lady Miriam."

Thus met  
She who most loved Him, he who rendered Him  
To death—Pontius and Mary. For, anon,  
The bar slides backward of the Woman's Court  
And, on the stairway of the leeward, stood  
One tall, and proud and fair; albeit past grief  
Had dimmed the lustre of those large dark eyes  
Bent upon Pilate. Rich the Jewish blood  
Glowed through the sunburnt ivory of her face—

Unveiled for salutation—leading show  
Of color to the thinned uncolored cheek,  
But leaving pale as pearly lined ocean shell  
The full white neck, and where neck rose to  
breast—  
The tender margins of the bosom, bound  
By silver bordered cymar, crossed; and pale  
As moonlight's heart the low smooth forehead  
framed—  
Under the black waved hair; forehead and hair;  
And eyebrows, bent like the new moon; full lids;  
Silk lashes, long and curved, shadowing with touch  
Of softest melancholy that worn place  
Where the tears gather—all declaring her  
A Daughter of the Sun, in those climates born  
Where light and life are larger.

Now, most meek  
The proud, pale, bended face; the folded palms,  
The knees touching the pavement, as she said—  
"The Roman Lord, who may command, hath  
prayed  
Speech with his servant. She must needs obey,  
Hostess and subject, I am Miriam!"  
"Wottest thou who I am?" asked Pontius,  
The flame of those old fires a little leaped;  
The fair hill shook again with bygone storms  
One moment while she murmured:—"Time hath  
been  
When, with a curse, or by my girle knife  
The answer of thy handmaid had been given.  
Now I have grace to say I hate thee not.  
But pray His peace for thee. Did he not pray,  
'Father, forgive them? Yes, I know thee well.  
'Twas thou didst send my Master to the Cross!"

"Hast thou forgiven, who didst love Him so,  
That which my well worn soul, careless of blood,  
Pardons not to itself?" quoth Pontius.  
And Mary said:—"I could not love Him so,  
Nor rightly worship Him, nor live to-day—  
As always I must live—on the dear food  
Of His true lips, nor trust to go to Him  
The way He went, if I forgot His word—  
'Love ye your enemies.' Remembering that  
I hear to look upon thee, Roman Lord!  
Remembering what we heard Him say at last:  
'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

"Nay, but I knew!" quoth Pontius. "Whereunto  
Prayedst thou thy Rabbi? What new God had he?  
What God hast thou greater than Jove—to nod,  
And so undo past deeds which have been done,  
And—so unto thyself—'forgive'?"

"That which befalls,"  
She gave reply, "befalls not otherwise  
Than as it hath been willed. He made us know  
There cometh to the ground no little fowl,  
No sparrow of the housetop, but its seed  
Was sown for; and the flowers and lowly grass,  
Which are to-morrow for the wayside fire,  
Have raiment fore-provided them to wear  
Brighter than Solomon's. If not one life  
Goes anywhere to death, save for good use,  
And by the overruling Power allowed,  
Under vast Law of Love, He—most of all—  
Died for Love's sake, and was ordained to die,  
Whom thou didst doom. Yet thou thyself wert  
doomed  
To do Love that sad service, slaying Him  
Who could not die; but freeth all from death;  
For we have seen him, strong and beautiful,  
And living on the farther shores of Death.  
Therefore we hate thee not, but pity thee;  
And those like thee whose evil prospers good;  
And pray for thee, since Love alone helps Hate  
To 'escape the whip that scourge it into Right,  
And bring it by long penance into peace  
Unwittingly—under a greater Name  
Than what thou namest and thy Romans serve."

"Yes!" Pontius mused: "He spoke to me of  
power  
Lent from above, and not from Jove or Rome!  
What hindered that I should not use it, then,  
To have thy peace this night in place of ire?  
To taste full greatness of thy feebleness,  
Not groan with littleness of majesty?"

She answered: "That which hindered was thy-  
self  
More feared of Cesar than of wrongfulness;  
And that which hindered was thy lust to win  
Favor of men instead of praise from Heaven,  
Whose still voice whispered thy vexed will in vain.  
He spoke to us: 'Lay up no treasures here,  
Where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves do steal,  
But lay it up in Heaven.'"

Pilate broke in:  
"Miserable! I would give much sesterces  
To buy that ill time back, albeit, before,  
Death never spoiled my slumbers! What said'st  
thou,  
That, slaying Him, we could not kill? Thy brow  
Wearst no band of madness, yet thy speech  
Sounds rank unreason."

"Have I leave?" she asked,  
"For my great Master's sake, to speak more near?"  
"I pray thee very humbly," Pontius said,  
"To speak as thou shalt deem."

Thereat she rose  
Stately, and light of living Love and Truth  
Made fairer her fair face, kindled her eyes  
To lovelier lustre, while she told the things  
Which had befallen after Calvary.  
How, surely, with the sad days ending there  
New days were dawned and hope unknown to  
earth.  
How He walked here, the shadow of Him Love,  
The speech of Him soft Music, and His step  
A Benediction; making sick folk whole,  
The lame to walk, the lepers to go clean,  
And taking back the dead from Death, by night  
Of some deep secret which He had from Heaven.  
Until—at that hour triumph of the Cross,  
In hour, and way, and by the appointed hands—  
He Himself passed, mild and majestic  
Through Death's black gate, whose inner side none  
saw  
Before He set it wide, golden and glad,  
Conqueror for us of the Unconquerable.  
Also, along those coasts, what works He wrought—  
Many most mighty works—and how He taught  
The nearness of eternal things, the law  
Of perfect Sunship; being Son of God  
By eminence of manhood; King of Kings  
By royalty of surpassing realms and crowns.  
Also as told beautiful words He spoke—  
Words of bright mercy and of boundless peace—  
With wisdom wondrous, clad in simplest speech  
As scent and silver leaves are shut, and seed,  
For golden gardens under suns to come,  
In the unfolded flower cup. "Which blest buds"  
Spoke she: "shall blossom ever more and more  
For all flesh living, till the full fruit rounds,  
And there be 'Peace on Earth—Peace and Good-  
Will!'"

But many drew into the marble Court  
Silently, one by one, hearing those words  
Fearless and sure, spoke high to Pontius.  
For, 'twas as though the Angel's song anew  
Found echo in our air. And 'mid them came—  
Leaving his kneeling camel at the gate—  
A girly stranger in the Eastern garb,  
Sworded and turbaned, as those used who vend  
In the far tolling caravans of Hind.  
Reverent and rapt he stood; and when she ceased,  
Drew swiftly from his breast a silken roll  
Tied with a single thong, and banding low,  
Laid this at Mary's foot.

But Pilate leaped  
Fierce from his place, with visage white and  
writhed,  
"Call them to horse!" he cried, "for I will ride  
To Sepphoris, before his sun is high,  
If spurs can prick! One other watch spent here  
Will brand me Nazarene!"

"One nowise meet—  
Except for humbleness and gravity—  
To kiss the latchet of her shoe who walked  
The writing of the silken roll was this,  
In Syrian set fair; with much soft phrase  
Of salutation, and high courtesies  
Precedent, then she read:—  
"One nowise meet—  
Except for humbleness and gravity—  
To kiss the latchet of her shoe who walked

## BOOK II

## THE MACUS.

The writing of the silken roll was this,  
In Syrian set fair; with much soft phrase  
Of salutation, and high courtesies  
Precedent, then she read:—  
"One nowise meet—  
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